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AUTHOR Adams, W. Sam; Hoyt, Timothy H.
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ABSTRACT

The faculty of the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh established a new structure for integrating a flexible calendar within the traditional semester. The new Calendar divides the fall and spring semester into 7-7-3 week modules and the summer semester into two 4-week modules. The Calendar's major purposes are to encourage curriculum innovation and faculty development, attract new learners, and increase alternatives for continuing students. The framework for the Calendar was developed by thirteen special Calendar committees involving over 100 faculty, students, and administrators. The committees dealt with concerns such as budget, faculty development, student progress, faculty responsibility, curriculum, scheduling, administration, public relations, new learners, new students, academic policies, and evaluation. The new Calendar includes such innovations as self-paced, autotutorial instruction, computer-monitored instruction, programs for adult learners; and programs offered in public libraries that are being primarily funded by base reallocation. In addition, the two-year calendar experiment has incorporated a comprehensive evaluation program that uses national and local instruments to assess changes in students, faculty, and administrators' attitudes about the calendar. (Author)

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REALLOCATION OF TIME AND RESOURCES

THE NEW OSHKOSH CALENDAR PLAN

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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W. Sam Adams
Director of Planning

Timothy H. Hoyt
Director of Institutional Research

University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh
Oshkosh, Wisconsin 54901

(414) 424-2133

HE 008 178

Abstract

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-OSHKOSH

Declining enrollment during the past three years has resulted in exceptionally large budget reductions, as well as the release of 21 tenured faculty. In order to reverse this trend, the faculty voted to establish a new structure for integrating a flexible calendar within the traditional semester. The new Calendar, which began in June, 1975, divides the fall and spring semester into 7-7-3 week modules and the summer semester into two 4-week modules. The Calendar's major purposes are to encourage curricular innovation and faculty development, attract new learners, and increase alternatives for continuing students. The framework for the Calendar was developed by thirteen special Calendar committees involving over 100 faculty, students, and administrators. The committees dealt with concerns such as budget, faculty development, student progress, faculty responsibility, curriculum, scheduling, administration, public relations, new learners, new students, academic policies, and evaluation. The new Calendar includes such innovations as self-paced, auto-tutorial instruction; computer-monitored instruction; programs for adult learners; programs offered in public libraries which are being primarily funded by base reallocation.

In addition, the two year calendar experiment has incorporated a comprehensive evaluation program which uses national and local instruments to assess changes in students, faculty, and administrators' attitudes about the calendar.

REALLOCATION OF TIME AND RESOURCES

THE NEW OSHKOSH CALENDAR PLAN

W. Sam Adams & Timothy H. Hoyt

BACKGROUND

In 1971, the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh (UWO) began operating under budgetary and enrollment constraints that, if continued, threatened its ability to function as a university. During that time, attempts to circumvent the financial exigency through the most traditional methods proved ineffective or inappropriate. The retrenchment was traumatic in contrast to the previous decade of growth. A series of events placed the institution in this untenable situation. Increased competition from vocational institutes, new public two-year colleges, and even a new public four-year institution in close proximity resulted in a reduction of UWO's share of the college freshman pool. This situation was accentuated further by declining college attendance rates among high school graduates.

Between 1970 and 1974 full time equivalent enrollment declined 15 percent and an enrollment-based budget formula decreased operating funds by the same proportion during that period. The University utilized its budgetary flexibility to base-reallocate among various programs, and managed to cut the smallest amounts in instructional areas by significant reduction in other areas. The number of needed faculty positions declined by 10 percent during that period, and in the spring of 1974, 22 tenured faculty were layed off.

The experiences of UWO indicate that the institution desiring to alter the steady state environment must look beyond minor manipulations of

personnel policy for a long-term solution. It must come to grips with an examination of its total program and services and assess the degree to which they will remain attractive during a period of increased competition for a declining pool of students. Institutions which meet the needs of their constituencies in unique ways will be more likely to escape the drastic effects of diminishing enrollments and resources than those which continue old policies in a new era for higher education.

To counter these events, an innovative Oshkosh calendar was proposed in 1974 by a new university chancellor, who came with the expectation that the campus environment was ready for a change. The institution, therefore, was predisposed by the events of retrenchment to favorably consider any reasonable alternative to past practice which gave promise of relief.

The discussion of the proposed new calendar was done in a manner that: attempted to share fully all information on past and projected university problems; identified the characteristics of the program in enough detail so that everyone was aware of the major elements; and, encouraged opinions at all times and through all levels in the developmental stages. An open atmosphere was achieved by the administration when it published a series of thirteen "calendar papers," each dealing with a specific aspect of calendar reform. In addition, administrators met individually with over 40 different departments to share information and obtain reactions.

The concept was initially presented to the faculty in August, 1974. In October, the same year, a faculty referendum was conducted with 90 percent of the faculty participating; about two-thirds of those voting favored the new program. It also carried the endorsement of the Faculty Senate, the Oshkosh Student Association, and the student newspaper.

A Calendar Coordinating Council was formed to organize the new program with 12 faculty-student-administrative committees. Each committee dealt with a separate aspect of the new calendar, such as academic policies, curriculum, registration, faculty responsibilities and evaluation. Their recommendations went to appropriate faculty, student or administrative groups before final review by the chancellor. The Council was organized as a "kleenex committee" which would be discarded once its primary function was served. As a result of their activities, the university was able to identify and resolve many of the major problems which accompany an institutional change of this magnitude in a period of seven months.

DEFINITIONS OF CALENDAR MODULES

The range of courses (modules) offered at UWO during a semester, with the description or rationale for each, is discussed below. Categories are not exclusive, so that some courses fall in several groupings.

14-week courses: Identical to traditional 17-week courses, but utilizing 60- rather than 50-minute periods so that total class time is the same (17 weeks X 3 periods X 50 minutes = 14 weeks X 3 periods X 60 minutes).

7-week courses (first 7 weeks): Meeting 6 periods a week for 3 credits, or 3 periods a week for 1.5 credits, or comparable combination. For course work requiring more intensive involvement than in a 14-week sequence.

7-week courses (second 7 weeks): As above, but also permits student to register for first time in the "middle" of the semester to support work or family obligations.

3-week courses: Intensive courses with time and credits variable.

1-credit courses: Self-paced, auto-tutorial, some with Computer Managed Instruction (CMI) and Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI) components.

Self-paced (Continuous Registration): Auto-tutorial, with access at any time during the semester and completion dates determined by student.

CALENDAR OBJECTIVES

The new calendar provides the university with the flexibility to:

* permit a calendar of two 14-week semesters to operate without inhibiting the operation of supplementary alternative calendar imbedded within it
* offer courses of three, four, seven or fourteen weeks in length
* provide continuous registration multiple entrance and exit points for students to facilitate stop-out opportunities and increase options for the part-time learner and adults
* assign faculty to teach during various terms, including the summer, to increase productivity
* permit faculty to concentrate their teaching load so that blocks of free time are established for research, curriculum development and similar activities
* permit faculty to plan five-month periods of non-university activity in one year by teaching more intensively in another
* establish an in-service "faculty college" during two three-week terms each year in which faculty will offer courses to their colleagues, either discipline-based or dealing with new approaches to education techniques
* provide additional compensation to faculty for meritorious projects performed outside their (9 month) contractual employment periods.

FLEXIBLE SCHEDULING

The careful and planned development of courses within the modular calendar have lead to opportunities for students to plan unique academic schedules. For example, a student may reduce the course load during the 14-week semester by taking four 3-credit courses, and pick up 3 more credits by taking one course in the 3-week term. Conversely, a student may overload by taking six 3-credit courses each running 14 weeks, and a 3-credit course during the 3-week term. This alternative, available to the most capable students, would permit a student to earn a baccalaureate degree in less than three years by attending two summer sessions.

Students may depart more radically from the traditional semester pattern by combining the more intensive modules. For example (Figure 1) a full load of 15 credits may be earned in a semester with a student never carrying more than two courses at one time: two 3-credit courses during the first 7-week term and the second 7-week term, and one 3-credit course in the 3-week term.

Insert Figure 1 about here

By combining courses offered over 14 weeks with 7-week courses, 3-week courses, and self-paced auto-tutorial courses, students can put together programs which vary their workload in many ways to meet their own personal needs and learning styles. In a similar manner (Figure 2) vacation times can be flexibly arranged to meet personal requirements for work, leisure, or family obligations.

Insert Figure 2 about here

Initially it was thought that scheduling options in the traditional pattern would predominate, and modular course scheduling would increase slowly. The faculty were encouraged, not required, to develop 7- and 3-week courses, and students obviously, were not familiar with utilizing modular course options. However, it became evident early that interest in and need

for the program was even greater than anticipated. Actual enrollment data for the 1975-76 fall semester is shown in Figure 3

Insert Figure 3 about here

Of approximately 31,000 total course enrollments during the fall semester, about 69 percent were in traditional (14-week) time sequences. An additional 16 percent occurred in 7-week courses, and 15 percent in the 3-week period. Modular courses were very popular, with fully one-quarter of all enrollments in one-credit courses either as independent academic units or as self-contained sub-divisions of longer courses. Self-paced courses continued to occupy a significant place in student choices, with over 17 percent of all course enrollments in this individualized format.

These data indicate that significant diversification of the curriculum has taken place during the first semester of the new program. Although the new calendar can be considered to be a "radical" approach to the use of time, one of the large number of alternatives it makes available is the traditional semester with which many students and faculty feel most comfortable.

There are at least three learning advantages offered by the 7-7-3 calendar. First, students are able to concentrate on fewer subjects at one time. Many students currently carrying five or six courses each semester are not able to focus attention sufficiently to minimize learning. They must "fire-fight"

courses as each makes demands. The new calendar allows students to concentrate on fewer courses for shorter periods while still completing the same number of credits over a semester. Second, students who are unsuccessful in a particular course are able to repeat it sooner, thereby hastening their return to good standing--an important factor in lessening attrition. Third, highly motivated students can complete the baccalaureate degree in three years, or both the baccalaureate and masters degrees in four.

CURRICULUM INNOVATION

The new calendar increases the flexibility necessary for curriculum change and development. To begin with, faculty select sequences of time which best meet the needs of the course material, rather than forcing each and every course into an identical time-frame. Furthermore, by breaking the lockstep schedule of the traditional semester, blocks of time are opened to faculty for planning curriculum development. For example, the 3-week period at the end of a term may be used to revise or develop course content. Reducing the teaching load during a 14-week period has permitted a faculty member to develop a new, intensive 3-week course and offer it almost immediately.

The calendar allows faculty members to arrange their schedules to make teaching in interdisciplinary courses much more common than it has been. Departments have utilized the 3-week term at the end of the semester to explore new possibilities for case study, independent study or intensive review courses for students who want the added experience or who need to improve skills.

The calendar has encouraged variable credit courses in which students enroll for less or more than the standard credit in an elective; one-credit

courses designed to stand alone, to serve as one-credit modules within interdisciplinary combinations, or to serve as introductory modules to be followed by one or more credits of independent study. Departments have grouped three or more courses offered intensively during the 14-week or two 7-week terms and offered an integrator course during the 3-week term, as an applied studies project.

FLEXIBLE STAFFING

The new calendar reorganizes the faculty load dimensions of the academic year to provide greater opportunities for course development, university governance responsibilities, research, and other professional activities. Faculty responsibilities remain the same as under the traditional calendar: an annual teaching load of 24 (Standard College Hours) undergraduate credits and campus-based responsibilities, other than teaching, extending over 34 weeks; however, the responsibilities are distributed in a different and more effective manner. Under the traditional calendar all classes were conducted for the full length of the 17-week semester, during which time a faculty member was also expected to engage in development, governance and research. Under the new calendar, the 17-week semester is broken into smaller time components which is used by the faculty member to separate the time demands of governance, research and development from teaching. Because the longest course option available is 14 weeks rather than 17 weeks, many faculty have experienced a slightly increased teaching load during this time period. On the other hand, faculty teaching 12-credit loads within the 14 weeks, a 3-week period at the end of each semester is free of any teaching responsibilities. Some faculty have chosen to teach part of their load during the 3-week term, and have had load reduced proportionately during the 14-week period.

Faculty members who complete their teaching responsibilities in less than 34 weeks engage in campus-based professional activities during additional periods to bring their total campus based activities to a Regent-mandated 34 weeks. During such periods, faculty members are required to be accessible to students and colleagues, and engage in professional activities related to the university governance curriculum development, and student counseling. Some faculty members have been required to teach during the summer semester as part of their workload, and have taken a 7-week module during the fall or spring semester as their vacation period.

Figure 4 shows the number of faculty functioning under various alternatives during 1975-76.

Insert Figure 4 about here

As would be expected during the first year of a new program, about 80 percent of the faculty chose to teach a traditional schedule. However, many alternative possibilities are being explored by about a fifth of the faculty. It is possible that the proportion of faculty selecting unusual schedules will significantly increase in the future as they become familiar with the range of alternatives and their effects upon professional development opportunities.

The new staffing patterns offer many advantages, some of which are not immediately obvious and which the university is only now beginning to under-

stand. For example, it is easier now to include portions of faculty time as matching support for extramural contracts and grants than had been true in the past. It has also made it easier than formerly to provide staff support for non-traditional projects with personnal needs and time sequences not consistent with traditional calendars or faculty schedules. We can engage in "series staffing," rotating persons in and out of sponsored projects based on need and individual competence with much greater ease than before. In general, it appears as if this flexibility will make it more possible for us to present an image to external funding sources and other institutions which will promote cooperative activities and permit almost instantaneous response to programmatic needs.

A variety of annual (9 month) contractual faculty arrangements is shown in Figure 5. The hours within each block are Standard College Hours.

Insert Figure 5 about here

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

The implementation of faculty development programs have become increasingly urgent as growth comes to an end, faculty mobility diminishes and departments and colleges become heavily overtenured. The new calendar reallocates time in a manner which will encourage activities contributing to

maintaining and enhancing teaching effectiveness. It also goes beyond this to provide resources to support more extensive activities for professional renewal. Time for these activities exists under traditional calendars in summer vacation periods, but often is used for additional teaching for compensation rather than personal development. As a consequence of the flexibility in faculty assignment created by the new calendar, as well as the agreement by the faculty to accept lower salary levels for additional teaching, the university has been able to create a yearly fund of $200,000 for development purposes. Part of this fund has been used to support faculty research performed outside the regular contractual period. A portion is allocated to each college for use under university guidelines for supporting extensive efforts in curriculum development, institutional service, institutes, in-service programs and professional improvement activities. The balance of the fund is used to support university-wide and inter-college programs, one of which is the establishment of a "faculty college" in which faculty offer short courses to their colleagues.

CALENDAR EVALUATION

A calendar evaluation is being conducted under the supervision of a committee comprised of administrators, students, and faculty with expertise in testing and evaluation. The committee will review a final report in the early spring of 1977 which will be distributed to the entire faculty prior to the referendum scheduled for later that semester. The report will indicate the results of the extensive evaluation program now underway which includes: (1) pre- and post-test administration of nationally normed instruments (the Institutional Functioning Inventory and the Institutional Goals Inventory)

and a locally constructed instrument; (2) reports of enrollments, grades, etc.; (3) analyses of student, faculty and administrative reactions to various aspects of the new program collected by means of short, five-item questionnaires completed by university participants immediately after a term or activity is over. These short questionnaires, or "Mini-Q's," have been completed at registration and at the completion of each of the modular terms. A sample of one of the Mini-Q instruments (requesting the reactions of faculty finishing 7-week courses) is shown in Figure 6.

Insert Figure 6 about here

Information collected through these instruments is reviewed immediately by the Calendar Evaluation Committee. The Committee has recommended that these data not be released to the University community until its final report is prepared so that the data are not influenced by the reporting of previous results. Several colleges and other academic units are also conducting evaluative programs supplementing the University effort. For example, the College of Nursing will be comparing student academic achievement in 7- and 14-week versions of the same course this spring to determine the effects of different time periods upon learning.

The Office of Planning and Institutional Research has major operational responsibility for implementing the evaluation component. The objectives of evaluation process are:

1. To assess changes in campus activities, climate, and attitudes of students, faculty, administrators, and the local community as a result of calendar implementation.

2. To measure student and faculty attitudes toward unique instructional formats, teaching strategies, and auto-technologies who have been directly affected by calendar reform activities.

3. To evaluate the effectiveness of calendar activities in meeting specific student interest groups' needs, e.g. part-time adult learners, commuting students, "drop-in" - "drop-out" students, ethnic minorities, veterans, etc.

4. To assess the affective responses of faculty to the faculty development program which involves compensation for additional service for curriculum development, research, and in-service training.

Any change in a complex system provokes unanticipated consequences and problems. Given the magnitude of the changes at the University, it is surprising not that problems exist, but that the problems are relatively few in number and can be rationally resolved. This is additional evidence of the unusual administrative skills of large numbers of persons, but, more significantly, reflects upon the committed efforts of faculty -- some of whom do not favor the new calendar -- to work toward its success.

The first year of a two-year experimental program is completed. Much more experience and careful evaluation will be necessary to determine if the benefits to students, faculty and public are worth the costs which have been and will continue to be paid. Those costs are not fiscal ones. Indeed, the total budget demand of the University (excluding salary increases) is less than in previous years. Rather, the costs are those of the increased demand on the energies and commitment of the faculty, of the anxiety and discontinuity

that attends any large organizational revision, and of the uncertainty as to the eventual success of so many new academic approaches introduced in so short a time.

Whatever the final form the Oshkosh calendar plan may take, it has already altered an entire concept of time, restructured and revitalized professional development, and created an administrative system which is unique in the nation. The calendar has opened new and vigorous educational alternatives to students who must be the ultimate beneficiaries.

The final outcomes of the Oshkosh calendar will be presented at the 1977 AIR Forum.

Figure 1

SAMPLE STUDENT'S SEMESTER COURSE SCHEDULE

HISTORY (3 CREDIT)	LITERATURE (3 CREDIT)	ENGLISH
SPEECH (3 CREDIT)	GEOGRAPHY (3 CREDIT)	(3 CREDIT)
1ST SEVEN WEEK	2ND SEVEN WEEK	THREE WEEK

Figure 2

SAMPLE STUDENT'S SEMESTER COURSE SCHEDULE

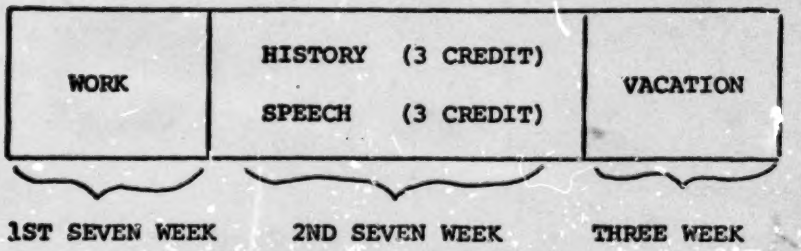

Figure 3

FALL SEMESTER 1975-76
COURSE SECTIONS AND ENROLLMENTS

	NUMBER OF COURSES	NUMBER OF SECTIONS	NUMBER OF STUDENT/ COURSE ENROLLMENTS
14 WEEKS	1,047	2,005	21,634
1ST 7 WEEKS	136	232	3,464
2ND 7 WEEKS	81	133	1,608
3 WEEKS	82	214	4,682
1 CREDIT	293	657	7,726
SELF-PACED	155	443	5,251

Figure 4

1975-76 FACULTY ASSIGNMENT BY TERM

	SUMMER 4 4	FALL 7 7 3	SPRING 7 7 3	NO. OF FACULTY	PERCENT
TRADITIONAL		X X X	X X X	414	80.9%
3-WEEK VACATIONS	X X	X X	X X	38	7.4
HALF SEMESTER OFF	X X	X X X	X	24	4.7
EXTENDED SUMMER OFF	X	X X X	X X	26	5.1
2-YEAR CONTRACT	- INDIVIDUALIZED -			10	1.9
				512	100.0%

Figure 5

SAMPLE FACULTY ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULES

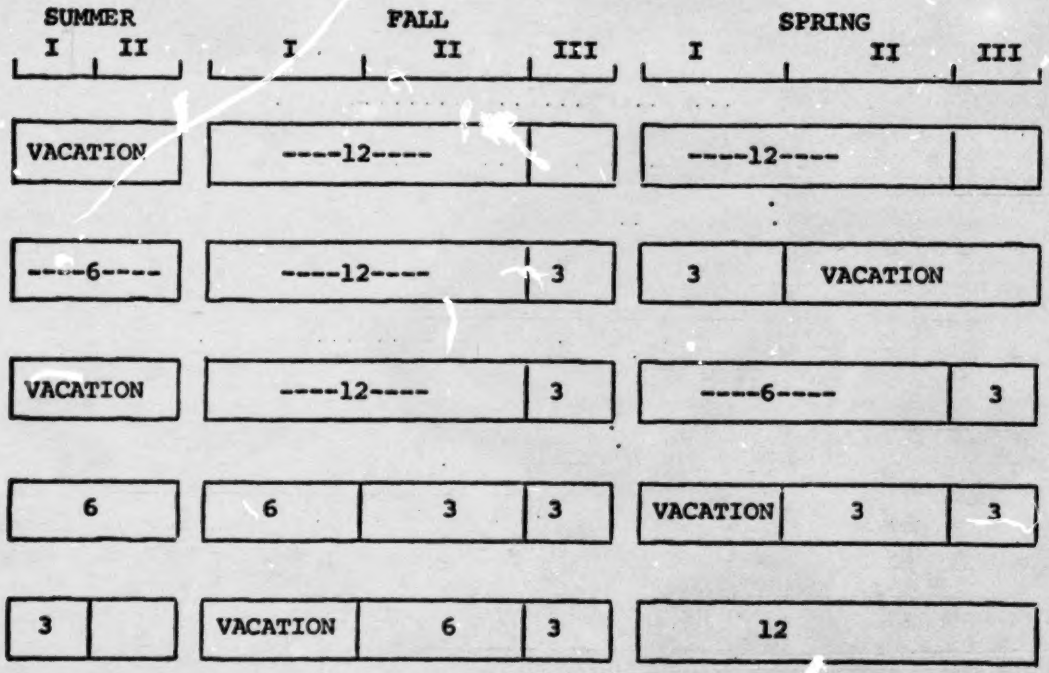

Figure 6

SAMPLE SEVEN WEEK FACULTY MINI Q